

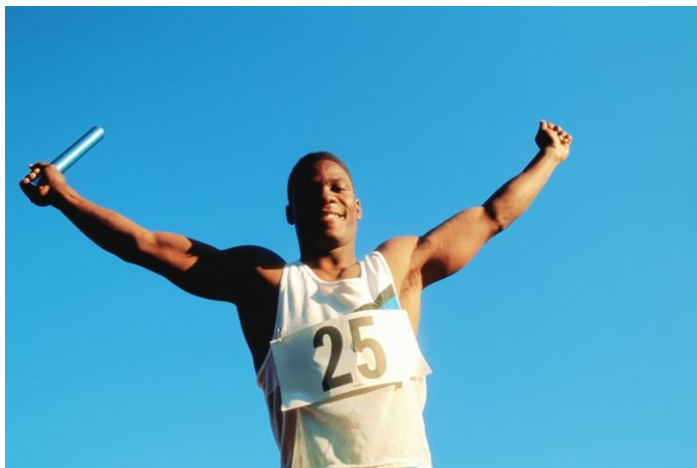
# ***The Cross: Resurrecting the True Self***

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***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20***



In Ephesians 4:22-24 we are told to “put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires” and to “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”. What is our “new self” – our “true self” – that Paul tells us to put on? It is that part of us that truly bears the image of Christ. It is our true self that has the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). The “old self”, or “false self” is that part of us that has been rendered dead in Christ. As Paul writes in Galatians 2:20, we have been crucified with Christ! It is no

longer we who live, but Christ now lives in us! In order to live a victorious Christian life, we need to grasp the full impact of what that means to all of us who are believers. This is not some special blessing reserved only for the Apostle Paul. It is a promise – a reality – for all who ask Jesus Christ into their hearts; even those who still struggle with sin.

When we choose to live out of our false self, we choose to remain identified with the old man that has been put to death by Jesus Christ and fail to accept our new identity in Him. We choose to remain identified with the sinful struggles and painful wounds that seek to define us and keep us in their grip. Many of us have reacted to our sinfulness with self rejection. We create a narcissistic mask and try to be “acceptable” to others by becoming who we wish we were, and feeding off of their admiration for “us”. Others have responded to self hatred by idolizing our relationships with significant others. We seek to become “complete” as we become emotionally and spiritually enmeshed with those we think possess the qualities we lack. Neither narcissism nor relational idolatry bring life. Others try to avoid the pain of the false self through religious perfectionism and become entangled in what Andy Comiskey identifies as the “tyranny of the ought” and “self-depreciation”. He writes that “our lives become governed by a series of inner commands that we never quite carry out to our own satisfaction” and that we “badger and belittle ourselves for not being or doing good enough”. Our anxiety and legalism prohibit us from ever rejoicing in the victory God has given us. We live by a pharisaical code of unreachable goals, never feeling fully accepted by God.

Many of us have grown up hearing how stupid or useless we are. The harsh words of others like faggot, sissy, dyke, and worse; cut like a knife to the depths of our souls. We often speak the same labels to ourselves and absorb the identities that they bring. Our self talk is just as powerful as the words spoken by others. It is time to place those labels and identities at the cross and embrace our true selves. It is time to walk without our masks in God’s grace and in healthy fellowship with safe people in the Body of Christ. Lazarus was called forth out of the grave. Jesus Christ gave him resurrection life, but he was still bound by grave clothes. Christ ordained that others in his circle of friends help remove the image which bound him. At that

point, Lazarus was faced with a choice. Would he resist the Body of Christ as they helped him embrace life? Would he humble himself and allow others to help strip him of the only “covering” that he had and have his nakedness exposed? Fortunately, he allowed his grave clothes to be removed and was clothed in God’s righteousness. As we share our weaknesses with safe, trusted others we find that our grave clothes begin to fall away and we become clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We lay down our old man – the false self – and stand in our true self.

Sometimes we’re afraid to let go of the past. After all, it’s all we’ve known. Even the Israelites preferred the “known demon” of slavery in Egypt to the unknown miracles of God they were experiencing in the wilderness. We cannot afford the “comfort of a known demon” any longer. We must surrender to Jesus at the foot of the cross and ask Him who we are. We must ask Him for a supernatural revelation of our true selves. He is willing to tell us. During one season, I was particularly depressed and struggling with my own identity. I kept praying in my heart, “Lord, help me I’m gay.” I was continually relating to my false self and accepting the guilt and shame that Jesus had already taken upon Himself. After debasing myself for quite a few weeks, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said, “You are not gay! You are a redeemed saint, start calling yourself that!” Those words finally pierced my heart. As I began to embrace the truth, the shame and guilt were replaced by Christ’s strength. It is so important that we turn from our false selves and ask the Lord to speak His truth to us. It is even more important that we embrace God’s truth when He does speak and begin to apply it to our lives.

We do have a big part to play in our journey. We are in a war, and Christ expects us to fight the good fight. Fortunately, He has given us all that we need to be successful. Second Corinthians 10:4-5 reads, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **We** demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we** take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” Standing in our true selves empowers us to stand and fight the foes that Christ has already defeated. Standing in our true selves empowers us to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19).

God wants us to love ourselves just as we are. He does. We are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39) This implies that we are unable to love others if we are unable to love ourselves. We are only able to truly love ourselves as we kneel before Jesus, learn who we are in Him, and begin to live out of the heart that Jesus gave us – our true self that is a reflection of His glory.



If you are having a difficult time identifying with your true self, I encourage you to spend some time in prayer this Christmas season and ask the Lord what masks and labels you may be holding on to. Surrender those things to Christ and sincerely ask Him for a revelation of how He sees you. When He speaks, allow those words to go down deep into your soul, speak them out over yourself, and walk in them. Live in your true self. Embrace 2 Corinthians 5:17. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

***“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11***